Speculative Space (Spec Space)/White Box Permits

Owners or management companies with tenant spaces for lease or rent requesting permit(s) for Spec space, to generate business by building out the vacant space to show the potential customers options for their tenant space. This standard provides clarification of the requirements for application, review, permitting, and inspection of Spec space or white box spaces.

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Requirements: It should be understood that this type of permit is only issued to assist building management to show potential buildout opportunities. These spaces are for show only and are not to be construed as habitable spaces under the fire code. Additionally, this space is not to be used for storage of any materials, furniture, equipment, or other items. The spec space or white box permit is classified as a “U” occupancy, under the fire code. The occupancy load will be set to “0” (zero), not allowing occupancy of the space. It should be noted that if at any time the property owner or management company wishes to lease or rent the space to a tenant; a completed application with required documents shall be submitted for permitting and an inspection conducted by the fire code official for compliance for that type of occupancy.

To obtain a spec space or white box permit an applicant shall:

1. Complete the “Spec Space or White Box” application
2. Submit plans for the buildout
   a. Detailed Site Plan
   b. Detailed Floor Plan
3. Obtain required permits
4. Request the fire code Inspection
5. Obtain compliance with the fire code and obtain a conditional certificate of compliance for a “U” occupancy

Harris County will only allow for one spec space or white box permit per building. If there are multiple buildings with tenant spaces for lease/rent on a single property; each building can have a single spec space or white box permit.

If compliance is gained for a spec space or white box, a conditional certificate of compliance will be issued, not allowing for occupancy. The conditional certificate of compliance shall be written for a maximum time of 180 days. If after 180 days the space has not been permitted as a tenant space, and the owner wishes to continue to use the space as a spec space or white box; the owner or representative shall submit and pay for a new permit and request a new inspection to determine continued compliance. If it is determined after the inspection that the spec space or white box is compliant, another conditional certificate of compliance can be issued for a maximum 180 days. This process shall continue until the property owner leases the space to a tenant or determines that they no longer want to use the space as a spec space.

If you have any questions about this STANDARD, please contact us at firecode@hcpid.org or fmosupport@fmo.hctx.net
Spec space and White Box permits are for a single unit within a single building, and shall not be moved from space to space without permitting the new space.

It is unlawful to occupy a spec space or white box without the required tenant buildout permit or without obtaining a certificate of compliance that allows occupancy. If it is observed that a spec space or white box is being occupied and business being conducted from the space without the proper permits or inspections, or if renewal of the spec space conditional certificate of compliance is not accomplished after 180 days has expired; Harris County will pursue enforcement actions including criminal and civil penalties.

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